

# *The Divine and Human*

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The divine and human





# THE DIVINE AND HUMAN;

OR,

FORE-ORDINATION AND FREE-AGENCY

AS ILLUSTRATED IN

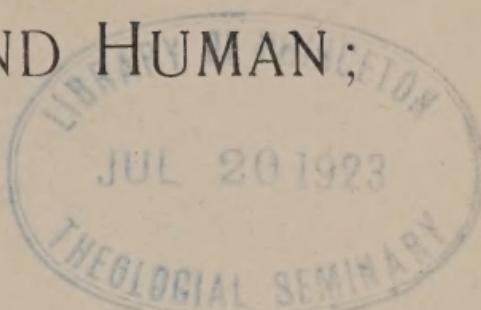
PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION.

BY

REV. L. H. WILSON.

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## CONTENTS.

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### I.—PREDESTINATION.

Common conceptions of Predestination. What the doctrine really is. Doctrine stated. Scripture proof of the doctrine. Inferences drawn from these and similar passages of Scripture. Doctrine commends itself to every reflecting mind. Every man by nature a predestinarian. Proof. In what respects Predestination in man differs from Predestination in God. Objections to the doctrine. Its bearing on Free-agency. Proof from Scripture that they do not conflict. Proof from Providence and from every-day experience. Bearing of this doctrine on the use of means. Does not do away with their necessity. Proof. Does not make God the author of sin. Proof. Doctrine is neither dishonoring to God nor discouraging to man. Uses of the doctrine. Conclusion of the whole subject.

## II.—ELECTION.

Prejudice against the doctrine. Ignorance of what the doctrine really is. Taught in Scripture. Proof. Deductions made from these and similar Scriptures. Doctrine stated. No bar or hindrance to the sinner. Why? No injustice in God in Election. Treats the sinner exactly as he wants to be treated, and as he asks to be treated. Election brought him into no worse condition than he was already or would have been without it. Inflicts no injury on him. In Election no influence exerted on the sinner, either *compelling* him to come, though unwilling, or *preventing* him from coming to Christ when desiring it. Recapitulation of the points. The design of Election. What is effected by it. Full of comfort to the child of God. How multitudes have been misled as to what the doctrine is. Proof. The mistaken assumption upon which all the misconception and aversion to the doctrine rests. The common and popular objection, “If I am elected, I will be saved,” etc.

## INTRODUCTION.

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THIS little work is not a compilation from larger works of theology, nor intended to present a full and complete argument on the subjects here discussed. It is simply a line of thought and argument which has suggested itself to the author, and been of great service to him in his meditations upon this great subject; and it is with the hope that it may be of similar benefit to others, when called to confront the deep mysteries of God, both in his purposes and in his providence, as all thoughtful minds are called to confront them again and again in their individual experience, that this line of thought is given to the public.

Nor is it a *controversial* work. It is written neither in the spirit of controversy, nor for the sake of provoking it, but for the purpose of shedding light upon a subject which to many

minds appears inscrutably dark and forbidding because of great mistake and misconception, but which, when disengaged of that misconception, becomes bright with hope and comfort and encouragement to every devout and adoring person, whoever he may be.

It is *a book for the people*. Its language, arguments and illustrations are all of a simple character, and within the comprehension of the common people whether learned or unlearned, all of whom may be interested in these subjects, but have neither the means to possess the large and learned theological works on the subject, nor the leisure to read them. All theological terms have been excluded in this treatise on the doctrines of Predestination and Election, and the author believes that even a child can understand and appreciate most, if not all, of the reasoning and illustrations here presented.

And lastly, the aim of the author has been to present a clear, candid, honest and scriptural statement of those great doctrines of the Pres-

byterian Church, as received and believed by her various communions, not only for the benefit of Presbyterians themselves, but also for the benefit of that large and intelligent class of thinkers and observers found in almost every community, who are drawn to her communion and her worship, but deterred from uniting with her through a mere misunderstanding of what that church really does believe in regard to these doctrines.

With these brief explanations of the nature and object of this treatise, and with the prayer that it may be blessed to the comfort and instruction of his people, by Him who “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,” and who is “wonderful in counsel and excellent in working,” this little treatise is sent forth on its mission.



# THE DIVINE AND HUMAN;

OR,

## FORE-ORDINATION AND FREE-AGENCY.

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### I.

#### **Predestination.**

THE idea of Predestination, as understood by many and charged upon its advocates, is about as follows: That everything that comes to pass, whether right or wrong, good or evil, comes to pass exactly as it does, for no other reason than that God fore-ordained it to come to pass in that way and no other, and therefore, that second causes have nothing to do with it whatever; that there is no necessity for using the means, either to accomplish some event, or to prevent its being accomplished, because every event can happen and will happen only as it has been fore-ordained to do; that man is

a mere machine, having no will or liberty of his own, and in all that he does is doing only what he was predestined to do; that God has created one portion of the human race for no other purpose than to damn them, and another portion solely to save them, and that the one will be lost do what they may, and the other saved do what they may, and for no other reason than that the one class was fore-ordained to be saved; and that all these results, as well as everything that happens, are merely the results of some arbitrary and despotic decree of a harsh and unmerciful Being; and, therefore, that it is of no use for man to attempt anything, either for his personal salvation or for his temporal good, because nothing will happen except what has been fore-ordained of God.

Such is their idea of the doctrine of Predestination, and such their highest and clearest conception of it. Of course, entertaining such conceptions of the doctrine as these, they have no other feelings towards it than that of bitter-

ness, aversion, and abhorrence, and no language is too strong and no epithets too severe to be used against it.

But it may be sufficient here simply to reply, that no *such* doctrine of Predestination is held by its advocates, and no such conceptions of it entertained by them any more than by its opponents. Such an idea of what *they* understand and believe as the doctrine of Predestination, is not only preposterous and abhorrent to them, but the grossest and most shameless caricature. In no sense does it express or represent the doctrine as understood, believed, and advocated by them.

What they understand by the doctrine of Predestination is simply this:

This world is not governed by chance, nor do things happen at random. There is a powerful, wise, and benevolent Being, who is governing and controlling all things according to the counsel of his own will, who knows his business, and understands what he is doing. This Being is God. He acts intelligently in

everything he does, doing nothing at random or in a hap-hazard sort of way. He has his purposes and plans in regard to everything that *has* come to pass, or ever will come to pass, so that nothing has happened or can happen, whether good or evil, which he has not either directly brought to pass, or, for wise reasons known to himself, *permitted* to come to pass. These "determinate counsels," by which he has determined to bring to pass, or determined to permit everything that does come to pass, are called his *purposes* or decrees, because it is something which he has purposed and determined to do, or something which he has purposed and determined to permit to be done.

These purposes or decrees were formed *in eternity*. God knows and always has known what he intends to do, without waiting for something to happen to enable him to know what to do next, because "known unto God are all his works from the foundation of the world." These purposes *include angels and men, this world and every world*; and while he

holds the destinies of all created beings in his hands, yet he has so ordered all things that the liberty of no creature, either angel or man, is interfered with or impaired in the least by his secret counsels, but each one is as untrammelled and as free to act as though no such secret counsels or decree existed ; and such is the nature of these hidden counsels of the Most High, and the wonderful manner of their execution, that no responsible creature, capable of acting for himself, will be either saved or lost on account of them, but simply and solely on account of his own personal acts.

These purposes or decrees of God are also *sovereign*, that is, according to his own will. In forming his plans, he does not confer with his creatures, nor consult with them as to what he will do or not do ; nor does he explain to them his reasons *why* he has determined upon one plan in preference to some other plan ; nor does he shape his plans to suit their actions, nor wait until they act before he can know what he will do. Both as to *what* he will do,

and *how he* will govern his own world and his own universe, he has determined long ago, even before those creatures were in existence.

And yet, while these determinations of his will are sovereign, they are at the same time neither arbitrary, despotic, nor unjust. He has wise reasons for everything he has decided on doing, and in the execution and accomplishment of these secret purposes of his, not an injury has been inflicted on his creatures, or can be inflicted.

These purposes of the Most High *are irresistible*. They cannot be, and will not be, defeated, frustrated, or thwarted, because “he doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none *can stay his hand*, or say unto him, what doest thou?” and will be, one and all, carried out and accomplished to the last iota; and the majestic march of time, with all its varied and wonderful events, is but the gradual yet grand development and unfolding of those secret and eternal purposes; and

when the last results of time have been reached, and the final consummation of all things attained, it will be discerned that all his counsels have been fulfilled, and that all things have been accomplished just as God intended, and that all has been devised and executed in infinite wisdom and love.

This, reader, is the doctrine of Predestination, as understood, received, and believed by its advocates.

Now, can such a doctrine as this find any countenance in scripture? Does it set forth, suggest, or sustain such a theory or such a doctrine in any shape or form? Does the Bible ever use the words "predestinate," "fore-ordain," or other words implying the same thing? Or does it countenance the idea, but under different words or forms of expression? The reader shall judge for himself.

Here are a few of the scripture statements on the subject:

"I am God, and there is none else. I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the

end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, *my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*”<sup>a</sup>

“Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”<sup>b</sup>

“For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, *for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*”<sup>c</sup>

“For whom *he did foreknow, he also did pre-destinate* to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did *pre-destinate*, them he also called,”<sup>d</sup> etc.

“God hath not cast away his people *which he foreknew.*”<sup>e</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Isa. xlvi. 9, 10.      <sup>b</sup> Acts ii. 23.      <sup>c</sup> Acts iv. 27, 28.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. viii. 29, 30.      <sup>e</sup> Rom. xi. 2.

*“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”<sup>f</sup>*

*“Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>g</sup>*

*“Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”<sup>h</sup>*

*“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>i</sup>*

*“In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”<sup>j</sup>*

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<sup>f</sup> Eph. i. 5,

<sup>g</sup> 1 Pet. i. 2.

<sup>h</sup> 1 Pet. i. 20.

<sup>i</sup> Jude 4.

<sup>j</sup> Eph. i. 11.

“According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>k</sup>

“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”<sup>l</sup>

“Seventy weeks (490 years) are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city; . . . and unto the end of the war desolations are determined; . . . he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”<sup>m</sup>

“And the King shall do according to his will; . . . and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that that is determined SHALL BE DONE.”<sup>n</sup>

“And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed.”<sup>o</sup>

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<sup>k</sup> Eph. iii. 11.   <sup>l</sup> Acts. xvii. 26.   <sup>m</sup> Dan. ix. 24, etc.

<sup>n</sup> Dan. xi. 36.   <sup>o</sup> Luke xxii. 22.

“The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.”<sup>p</sup>

“Before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and ordained thee to be a prophet unto the nations.”<sup>q</sup>

“Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up unto the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations,”<sup>r</sup> etc.

“The immutability of his counsel.”<sup>s</sup>

“There are many devices in a man’s heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.”<sup>t</sup>

“The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.”<sup>u</sup>

“Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months is with thee: thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.”<sup>v</sup>

“And it is turned around by his counsels;

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<sup>p</sup> Isa. xiv. 24. <sup>q</sup> Jer. i. 5. <sup>r</sup> Zeph. iii. 8. <sup>s</sup> Heb. vi. 17.

<sup>t</sup> Prov. xix. 21. <sup>u</sup> Ps. xxxiii. 11. <sup>v</sup> Job xiv. 5.

that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them.”<sup>w</sup>

“The *counsel of the Lord*, that he hath taken against Edom; and *his purposes* that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman.”<sup>x</sup>

“The *counsel of the Lord* that he hath taken against Babylon; and *his purposes* that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans.”<sup>x</sup>

“*Every purpose of the Lord shall be performed* against Babylon,”<sup>y</sup> etc.

“The anger of the Lord shall not return, . . . till he have performed the thoughts of his heart.”<sup>z</sup>

“Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”<sup>aa</sup>

“I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”<sup>bb</sup>

Such, reader, is but a partial array of the scripture testimony on this subject, which might easily have been increased and extended

<sup>w</sup> Job xxxvii. 12. <sup>x</sup> Jer. xlix. 20; l. 45. <sup>y</sup> Jer. li. 29.

<sup>z</sup> Jer. xxiii. 20. <sup>aa</sup> Num. xxiii. 19. <sup>bb</sup> Isa. xlvi. 11.

page after page, and which any conscientious person may readily ascertain by consulting the Bible for himself. What we have here collected, however, is sufficient to convey a fair idea of what the scriptures teach on this subject.

From these, as well as many similar teachings of scripture, Presbyterians have drawn the following inferences, which we believe every candid person must admit are legitimate, fair, and correct conclusions:

(1.) That God does nothing at random, or in a blind, unmeaning way. *He has a purpose in everything that he does.*

(2.) This purpose was formed in eternity, long before time began, "in the beginning," "before the foundation of the world," and therefore is not dependent on what his creatures shall afterwards do, or what shall afterwards happen.

(3.) This purpose refers to and includes every event and every incident in human history, so that no event has happened or can hap-

pen in all time, without the knowledge, permission or direct bringing to pass of God.

(4.) For very obvious reasons, this purpose is not subject to fluctuation, change, nor abandonment.

(5.) This purpose must, therefore, in every instance, and in regard to everything, irresistibly be accomplished; for what *God* hath willed cannot be prevented, but must assuredly be brought to pass.

(6.) And yet, at the same time, even while controlling human actors and human actions, so that his own immutable purposes are surely accomplished, his plans and purposes are carried out in such a manner (mysterious and incomprehensible to us, yet nevertheless true,) as not to interfere in the least with human free-agency or the moral liberty of the creature, nor to do away with the necessity of using the means, nor so as to make God the author of sin.

This, reader, is the doctrine of Predestination which Presbyterians believe is found in

the scripture, which is formulated in their doctrinal standards, and which, therefore, they receive and accept. And we are persuaded, on reflection, every intelligent and sensible person *must* believe the same thing, and *does* believe it.

We cannot conceive how it would be possible for God, as the moral Ruler and Governor of the universe, to rule and govern this world and universe, without having some definite purpose in his mind as to what he would do and *how* he would govern it, and some definite plan as to how that purpose would be carried out. Nor can we conceive how it would be possible for him to have a purpose which included only some events and not all events, because then there would be some things happening and coming to pass which he had not anticipated, and about which he knew nothing—things, too, which might defeat or disappoint the purposes which God had formed in reference to other things—all of which appears to us both impossible and absurd. Nor can we conceive how the moral Ruler and Governor of the universe

could be under the necessity of changing his plan, or from any cause whatever abandoning it for something else; because that would imply either ignorance, mistakes, or inability to accomplish what he was desiring and endeavoring to do, which would unmistakably prove that God was not possessed, either of wisdom, omniscience or almighty power, and therefore was not God.

Hence, God must have a definite purpose, formed in eternity, in regard to every event that has happened or can happen, and be able to carry out that purpose and that plan over all opposition, and without possibility of failure. And we believe that he does do it. And yet, reader, this is Predestination—nothing more and nothing less.

Now, reader, *you are a Predestinarian.* Every rational and intelligent person is, whether willing to admit it or not. That man cannot help being one who is endowed with reason, and who acts according to the dictates of that reason. The *architect* is a Predestina-

rian. He does not act at random, not knowing what kind of a house he is going to build, nor what shall be its shape, proportions or design, nor how or for what ends the different parts are to be constructed. He would be deemed an insane or idiotic architect who began an edifice not knowing what kind of a building he was aiming to construct, nor of what materials it was to be composed, nor according to what plan it was to be modelled; but continually changing his plans, just as some new idea seized him, or just as he might be able to find materials. Instead of this, he forms his plan beforehand, models the house or shapes the building according to that plan, carries out its minutest particulars, and at last completes the edifice, just exactly as he had intended and designed from the very beginning. *The husbandman* is a Predestinarian. He forms his plan as to what grounds he wishes to cultivate during the year, with what seeds they are to be planted, how they are to be cultivated, with what implements, and provides beforehand all

the necessary tools and implements needed to carry out his designs, and during the course of the year endeavors, as far as he can, to execute and accomplish these pre-conceived purposes and plans.

*The lawyer, professional man, mechanic, artisan, laborer,* and in fact all classes of mankind, are Predestinarians. Each and every one in his own calling, or his own occupation, acts on these principles. He first forms his purpose, shapes his plans for the accomplishment of some desired end, and then endeavors to carry out these purposes and plans.

We are all by nature Predestinarians. In this respect as well as in others, man was created in the image of his Maker. He purposes, forms his plans intelligently, and then, as far as he is able, carries them out. *But this is Predestination.* Predestination, however, in man and Predestination *in God* differ in the following particulars:

(1.) Man is a *fallible mortal*; he makes mistakes, and, therefore, is often led to change

his plans. God makes none; his plans, therefore, need no change.

(2.) Man is short-sighted. Subsequent light or experience suggest an alteration or modification of his plans. God is all-wise, seeing the end from the beginning, and can receive no new light or wisdom, so as to require a change or modification in his plans.

(3.) Man is weak, and often unable to carry out his purposes, and therefore compelled to abandon them. God is all powerful, and hence his purposes are irresistible, and cannot fail of accomplishment.

(4.) Man's plans and purposes include only himself, or at best only a few others, and only for a short period. God's plans include all events and all time.

(5.) Man's plans are formed at the present time, or from day to day, or year to year. God's purposes are from all eternity.

These are the principal points of difference between Predestination in man and Predestination in God—differences which are grounded

in the different natures of the two beings. One is a *finite*, the other an *infinite* Being; nevertheless Predestination in both is the same in kind, but different in degree. Man predestinates exactly as God does, so far as his finite nature and his finite powers will admit of it.

Now, reader, were such a thing conceivable, suppose that *you yourself* were a perfectly pure, holy and righteous being; that you had lived thousands of years ago, and that, instead of God, it had been assigned to *you* to order the lot, destinies, and future of every human being who was to be born; and that you were possessed of all wisdom, so as to be unable to make mistakes, and all power, so as to be able to carry out beyond the possibility of failure all your orderings respecting these human beings, and that you were possessed of kindness, benevolence and love, so that you could entertain no other feelings than these towards those yet unborn human beings—conceive all this if you can, and tell me whether a single human creature would have been

wronged, or injured, or unjustly treated in *your* orderings respecting him? Would a single one have had cause for complaint at what *you* had ordered as his lot or his destiny? Would there have been anything “horrible,” “arbitrary” or “despotic” in what you had designed for them? And yet what *you*, as a supposed pure, holy, righteous, kind, benevolent and loving being, would have ordered and carried out in regard to our world is what *God*, the *real*, and not the supposed, kind and benevolent Being *has* done in regard to our world and all worlds. And everything to-day, as it has done in all the past, is simply moving on and being carried out in accordance with that wise and gracious plan, and those kind, wise and gracious orderings formed in eternity. What is there so “horrible” or so dis-honoring to God and discouraging to man in all this? Is it not, on the other hand, just the reverse? Is it not comforting, cheering, encouraging, soul-inspiring? And is it any mar-vel, or anything surprising, that so many of the

deep thinkers of the world, and so many among the most intelligent, the most learned, godly, devout, active and earnest Christians of this and every other age, *have* believed, and *do* believe, in this most reasonable doctrine of Pre-destination?

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### **Objections to the Doctrine.**

1, Now how does this doctrine bear on the question of *man's free-agency*? Does it destroy, impair or interfere with it in the least? So, some have thought, and at first sight it might appear to have that effect. But it does not and cannot have that effect. How do we know that it does not? *From two unanswerable sources of proof, the testimony of Scripture and the testimony of human experience.* These both bear plainest witness that there is no conflict between fore-ordination and free-agency, and that neither interferes with the other in the slightest degree. *How* it can be so, we do not pretend to explain. We merely state *the fact*, like so many other inexplicable

facts, both in the moral and natural worlds, which we cannot explain, but which we are nevertheless compelled to accept as facts, leaving their explanations to a future world, where the mysteries of the present world will be explained, and its perplexing enigmas solved.

But that there is no interference with free-agency by the decrees and purposes of God the Scriptures most abundantly and emphatically make known. “The Son of Man *goeth as it is written of him*,” declares the Saviour, when foretelling his betrayal, suffering and death, but solemnly adds, “*woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed.*” “The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him”—here is Prædestination. The purpose and plan of God is being fulfilled as it had been marked out ages before. “But woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed”—here is free-agency, because that man acted freely and voluntarily who betrayed him, and was under no moral necessity *compelling* him thus to act; and so he himself felt

and acknowledged, as he afterwards confessed, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.” But there could have been no “sin” in that act of Judas, if he had not committed it freely and voluntarily, and under no moral compulsion.

“Him being delivered by *the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*,” says Peter, when charging the crime of his crucifixion upon the blood-stained inhabitants of Jerusalem, “*have ye taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain.*” Here again is *Pre-destination*, because it was the “determinate counsel” of God which had been accomplished, and *free-agency* because it had been accomplished by “wicked hands.” But there could have been no “wickedness” about it if the act had not been free and unconstrained on the part of the perpetrators.

“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray unto my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels; but how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled *that thus*

*it must be?"* Here, once more, is *fore-ordination*, because thus it must be, and *free-agency*, because Christ was perfectly free, and *could have* invoked the aid of the waiting legions of angels if he had seen fit to do so, and was under no compulsion in *not* doing so. "*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father?*" etc. It was in his power either to invoke that aid or not, just as he saw fit, because he acted freely and voluntarily in all that he did, and yet behind and under it all lay that mighty and mysterious decree, "*that thus it must be.*" But between the two there is manifestly no conflict. Passage after passage, of just such statements as those already quoted, could be quoted almost without number from the life of Christ and the Acts of the Apostles, illustrating the fact of both these doctrines, and at the same time their utter freedom of conflict one with another.

Turn now to another class of facts from Scripture history. Joseph's brethren think evil against their brother and sell him into

slavery, seeking to carry out their own free and unconstrained impulses. Here is free-agency. But God designs it for good, and by means of it carries out and accomplishes a divine purpose and plan for the deliverance of Joseph, and the preservation and ultimate deliverance of Israel. And this is Predestination. Pharaoh carries out his own desires and executes his own counsels, with no decree of fate nor overruling power *compelling* him so to act—and this is free-agency. But God declares, “And in very deed *for this cause have I raised thee up*, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.” And this is *fore-ordination*. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, goes forth to war, and so too does Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, at a subsequent period, each one bent on his own schemes of conquest, each one desolating towns and countries, overturning thrones and kingdoms, and each one utterly unconscious of a divine decree enfolding each and every act of their lives. Here is *free-*

agency. And yet in reference to both of them, the Most High declares that they were but the unconscious instruments in his hands of executing *his will* and accomplishing his secret counsels. This is Predestination. Cyrus, conqueror of Babylon, is born and reared in circumstances of obscurity, amid the mountain fastnesses of Media, receives his name, grows up to manhood, enters upon his career of conquest and marches triumphantly over all opposition to the full accomplishment of all his plans. The purposes of his heart are carried out and executed. He has no thought nor intention of fulfilling any divine decree nor accomplishing any divine purpose, but in all that he does, does it in entire deference to his own schemes and his own selfish desires—this is free-agency. And yet, long before Cyrus was born, or his parents born, was his *very name* made known, and his career of conquest spread with wonderful minuteness upon the prophetic page. And this is fore-ordination. And thus it is all through Scripture. The two doctrines

lie side by side, without conflict or interference one with the other, and both in harmony, because both are true.

*The testimony of human experience is equally clear and decisive.* That which occurred in the lives of Cyrus, Sennacherib, Pharaoh, and other Scripture characters, whose experience has been adverted to, occurs daily in the lives of every individual of the race. Each one thinks, purposes, resolves, acts according to his own desires or wishes; makes his plans and enters upon their execution, in the utter unconsciousness of any controlling or compelling influence exerted upon him by any unseen power, and feels that he is free to resolve or not to resolve, to act or not to act, as he himself may choose, and that there is nothing compelling him thereto or hindering him from it. And this is free-agency. And yet, at the same time, the secret counsels of the Most High respecting him are being minutely carried out exactly as they had been formed in the Divine mind ages before he was born.

And had God seen fit, he could just as easily and just as minutely have disclosed that individual's history centuries before his birth, as he did in the case of Cyrus or of Christ. But this is Predestination. And these two doctrines run side by side all along every individual's history, and all through life. Of our free-agency we are perfectly cognizant at all times, because this is the fact it especially concerns us to know; but of God's secret counsels, or of his purposes toward us, we get only occasional glimpses, because these are matters which it does not concern us to know.

Yet we *do* get glimpses of it sometimes, just enough to convince us that "the Heavens *do* rule," and that the counsels of the Most High are being carried out. "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will," and every man in his daily experience is again and again being confronted with that fact. Yet this is nothing more nor less than the same old truth so often assailed, and yet so often vindicated and confirmed, that "man

proposes, but God disposes," or, in other words, *fore-ordination and free-agency.*

2. *But how does this doctrine bear on the use of the means?* Does it not do away with their necessity entirely? Is there any room for using the means, or any occasion for doing so, if this doctrine of Predestination be true? Many have answered, No; we unhesitatingly answer, Yes, and we sustain our answer by exactly the same kind of proof we have already used, the *testimony of Scripture, confirmed by that of human experience.* Both the teachings of the Bible and the daily experience of mankind abundantly show that fore-ordination does not do away with the necessity of using the means, but rather confirms and strengthens it. In other words, because an event is absolutely fixed and certain, and infallibly bound to come to pass, because it is God's determinate counsel that it *shall* come to pass, that fact does not dispense with the necessity of using the appointed means to bring it to pass, but rather enforces and strengthens the necessity

for using just those very means. A few examples will make this sufficiently plain. David is to be king over all Israel. That is God's "determinate counsel" and purpose, formed long before David was born. That purpose and that fact is made known long before it is accomplished. It is made the subject of a beautiful and wonderful prophecy at least five hundred years before David came into existence,—the prophecy of the "sceptre and the star,"—fulfilled first and in a subordinate sense in David, and afterwards in a higher and more complete sense in Christ.

This divine purpose to exalt David king over all Israel is revealed to Samuel, and afterwards to Jesse, David's father, and then to David himself, while but a mere youth. Saul knows it; Jonathan knows it; all Israel knows it. Here, then, is one of God's "determinate counsels" made known to the sons of men, and *to the very persons* who are the subjects of that "decree," long before it has been accomplished or brought to pass. It is an event about which

there can be no doubt nor possibility of failure. It is an event *certain and sure*. No power on earth can defeat that purpose. It must and will infallibly be brought to pass. Here, then, is fore-ordination. Now, how does David act, and how does Saul act, both of them in the knowledge and full view of an event *which is certain and sure?* Do they reason, because this is something certain to be fulfilled and accomplished, therefore there is no necessity nor occasion for using the means to bring it about, or to defeat it? Just the contrary. Saul, not willing for the sceptre and sovereignty of Israel to pass from his hands, uses all his efforts to defeat that purpose; and David, knowing that he is certainly to be king over Israel, uses all his efforts to bring it to pass. He avoids falling into the hands of Saul, uses all lawful endeavors to preserve his life, and, after the death of his adversary, seeks to gain the hearts of the people and unite them upon himself, in order that he may be enthroned over them as their

sovereign. Why did David act thus? Because he well knew that, although an event was certain and sure, yet that fact did not dispense with the necessity of using the appointed means to bring it to pass. Accordingly, he used all lawful endeavors to accomplish the end which had been foretold to him, and which had been declared was infallibly certain and sure, and by that very means secured the foretold result.

Again: the King of Moab rebels against that of Israel, and endeavors to shake off his yoke. The King of Israel, forming an alliance with Edom and Judah, marches forth for the conquest and subjugation of Moab. The three kings become entangled in the wilderness of Edom, and are on the point of perishing, with all their armies and their cattle, for want of water. In their extremity they call upon Elisha, who is accompanying them, who makes known to them a determinate purpose of God, and reveals a coming event *which is certain and sure*. That event is water supplied in a

miraculous manner, and in a sufficient abundance for all their hosts, and through this miracle utter defeat to Moab. This was the predicted event. This was the “determinate counsel of God.” How was it brought about and accomplished? *By the use of the appointed means.* “*Make this valley full of ditches.* For thus saith the Lord, ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand,” etc. (2 Kings, iii. 16, etc.) Here was the divine and the human, God and man, the divine purpose and the human necessity of using the appointed means to accomplish that purpose, running side by side, as they do through all the affairs of life, and dependent, as it were, one on the other. It was God’s infallible purpose, his fixed and certain counsel, to bring deliverance and relief just then and there, and in that specific

way, and no other, and that purpose is made known. But there are appointed means to be used in order to accomplish that purpose, and which *must* be used in order to bring it to pass, and hence the command, "Make this valley full of ditches." Israel, in this instance, might easily have reasoned, "this event is *certain and sure*, because Jelioyah has made it known. It is absolutely sure to come to pass, and *will* come to pass without possibility of failure, because he has decreed it. What *we* will do, therefore, will have no effect upon it either way, because he can use these means, or other means, or no means at all, and accomplish this determinate purpose without any trouble whatever." But they did not so reason. They employed the appointed means, made the valley full of ditches, and *by that very instrumentality secured the fore-ordained result.*

Once more: Sennacherib, King of Assyria, invades the land of Judah, marches against Jerusalem and purposes its capture. In his

distress and extremity, Hezekiah, King of Judah, turns to the Lord, and invokes his interposition and aid. And here is the answer he receives: “Thus saith the Lord concerning the King of Assyria, *He shall not come into this city*, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For *I will defend this city*, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake.” (2 Kings, xix. 32, etc.) Here, again, is a *determinate purpose of God* foretold and made known to the parties respecting whom it had been formed. That purpose is to protect and defend Jerusalem against the assualts of Sennacherib, King of Assyria. By no possible artifice, stratagem, military skill nor courage is he to enter that city. “*He shall not come into it*, saith the Lord.” Here, again, is an event absolutely certain and sure. It is a *fixed fact* which no earthly power can change. Neither Sennache-

rib nor his Assyrian hosts shall enter that city, nor cast an arrow into it, because Jehovah has purposed to defend it; and he has made this purpose known before it has been accomplished. Now, does this foretold purpose, and the absolute certainty of its fulfilment, relieve Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the necessity of using the proper means to fortify and strengthen Jerusalem, and make it impregnable against the assaults of the Assyrians? Just the contrary. And, therefore, knowing that Sennacherib *cannot take it, and will not take it*, just because of this purpose of God, they go to work, strengthen its defences, and use the very means by which God's counsel is carried out and accomplished. *The certainty of a future event, and our knowledge of that fact, does not dispense with the use of those means necessary to bring it to pass.*

Paul the Apostle is in trouble. He is in the hands of his enemies, and perhaps despairing of his life, because God's purposes respecting

him have not yet been revealed to him, and it may be at Jerusalem that he is to “die for the Lord Jesus.” Who knows? Just at this juncture comes a cheering revelation to him. He is *not* to die at Jerusalem, at least not until he has first visited Rome and testified there to his Lord. Here is the assurance: “Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so *must* thou bear witness also at Rome.” (Acts, xxiii. 11.) Here is another of God’s “determinate counsels” made known long before it was fulfilled. *Paul is yet to bear witness for Christ at Rome.* This is God’s purpose, *certain and sure*, and no created being can defeat or prevent its accomplishment. And Paul *cannot be slain by art, stratagem nor accident*, nor die in any possible way until after he has visited and testified for Christ at Rome. *And Paul knows it*, because the Lord has just assured him of that fact. And yet the very next day, when his life is plotted against by an organized and powerful conspiracy of the Jews, instead of reasoning, “inasmuch as

it is God's purpose that I *must* testify of him at Rome, and therefore my life cannot by any possibility be taken before I have done that, as God's purpose must infallibly be accomplished," and thus imperilling his life, he reasons exactly the reverse, and *because* it is God's purpose that he is to visit Rome, and that he shall not die before he does visit it and testify to Christ, *therefore* he uses the proper means to preserve his life, and thus accomplishes the predicted result. Why did Paul thus act, both on this occasion and subsequently, when, in order to prevent falling into the hands of his enemies, he takes his appeal to Cæsar, when all the time *he knew* that he could not and would not be slain until after he had visited Rome, inasmuch as God had made this fact known to him? Because Paul well knew, as well as any man that ever lived, *that fore-ordination does not destroy free-agency, nor does the certainty of an event do away with the necessity of using the means to bring it to pass.* And knowing this, he uses all the ap-

pointed means, *and in that way* secures the predicted and fore-ordained end. .

Take another illustration. Ahab is proposing to make war against the Syrians for the recovery of Ramoth Gilead, one of his captured cities. He has engaged Jehoshaphat king of Judah to go with him. His own hired prophets give him every encouragement to go forward in his contemplated enterprise. War is decided upon and he prepares for battle.

He knows it not as yet, but *that* is to be his last battle. At the request of Jehoshaphat, the pious king of Judah, a true prophet is sent for—a prophet of Jehovah.

He announces a different result. Ahab is to receive his death wound in that battle. Never again is he to return alive to his country or his kingdom. Neither the manner of his death, nor the exact time, place or circumstances of its occurrence are revealed to him.

Nothing more is made known than the simple fact that he will not return alive from that campaign.

But *that* is a fixed fact and absolutely certain.

Here, then, is another of the hidden purposes of God revealed, and revealed, too, *to the very man who is the subject of it*. Ahab is to receive his death wound in battle, and *in that very campaign*. Nothing shall prevent the accomplishment of that purpose. It is certain and sure.

Here, then, again is *Predestination*. Now what does Ahab do? Reason within himself that because that event thus foretold is certain and sure, it will inevitably come to pass, and therefore that he need use no means to avert it? No, quite the contrary. He takes every precaution to protect and preserve his life, and to prevent the accomplishment of that revealed purpose of God. He disguises himself as a common soldier so as not to attract attention, puts on his armor, sees that all is secure, and thus secured goes into battle. Now he might have avoided all this. He need have done none of these things. He might have

## 50. *Fore-Ordination and Free-Agency.*

acted in an entirely different manner from what he did. *But he did not.* This is *Free-agency.*

On yonder side in the ranks of the enemy is an unknown soldier, distinguished in no way from all the other thousands who are warring that day against the armies of Israel. But he carries in his quiver the life of Ahab king of Israel, yet he knows it not. He draws his bow “at a venture,” or as it is literally in the original “in his simplicity,” *i. e.*, knowing nothing at all of him against whom his arrow was directed, nor of the solemn destinies hovering over his head, nor of the part that he himself was to play in the memorable drama of that day, nor of what that arrow that he was discharging from his bow was commissioned to do. Of all this he knows absolutely nothing. And this again is *Free-agency.*

He draws his bow, directs his shaft upon some one whom he sees in the enemy’s ranks. The arrow speeds along its appointed path, finds the only place where it could possibly

penetrate the armor, “the joints of the harness;” enters there, inflicts the predestined wound, and the stricken man falls forward in his chariot with the cry, “Turn thine hand and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded.” *It is Ahab*, the disguised but fated king of Israel. He has received his message. The arrow has fulfilled its mission. Carried quickly out of battle, which still continues to rage with unabated fury, all efforts to save his life prove unavailing. The wound is mortal. As the fiery sun goes down in the west, a proclamation is heard throughout the host, “Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.” Ahab is dead. His bloody corpse is carried back to Samaria, and there buried, exactly in all its particulars as God had purposed, and as he had partly revealed. And this is *Predestination*.

Did Predestination here interfere with Free-agency? Did Ahab the king, or the unknown Syrian archer, the one knowing God’s declared decree and the other not,—did either

one feel trammelled or compelled by that decree to do on that memorable day just what they did? Were they not both conscious of entire freedom in all their actions and under no compelling influence forcing them to act as they did?

Here, then, we see both Predestination and Free-agency, and neither one conflicting with the other.

*Once more:* Jeroboam is informed through Ahijah the prophet of one of God's hitherto unrevealed purposes. That purpose is to punish Solomon for his sin in turning from God by giving a part of his kingdom to Jeroboam. He is in the near future to reign over ten of the tribes of Israel, and Solomon's son is to retain but two of them for his kingdom.

To show Jeroboam that this is a fixed and determinate purpose, and therefore sure to be accomplished, the prophet rends the new garment of Jeroboam in which he had arrayed himself into twelve pieces, bidding him to take ten for himself, because in that manner is Sol-

omon's kingdom to be rent in pieces, and ten parts given to him and two to Solomon's son. The event is therefore certain and sure and infallibly bound to come to pass. Here again is Predestination.

This now revealed event of the future soon becomes known. Solomon knows it, Jeroboam knows it, Rehoboam knows it, all Israel knows it.

Now how do the parties most involved in this sure and certain event of the future, this purpose of God, act?

Solomon, knowing as well as any man ever knew "that the counsel of the Lord *that* shall stand,"<sup>a</sup> and that no power on earth can ever defeat these purposes of God, nevertheless, in this instance, endeavors to defeat it by attempting to slay Jeroboam; and Jeroboam, knowing equally as well as Solomon that God's purposes *shall certainly come to pass*, endeavors to bring it to pass by fleeing to a place of safety and remaining there until Solomon is dead.

But here is *Free-agency* in both of these instances, Solomon on the one hand endeavoring to defeat a known purpose of God, and Jeroboam on the other endeavoring to prevent a defeat of that purpose. Both acted according to their own free, untrammelled will, and acted each one just as he wanted to act.

So also did Rehoboam afterwards when the time came for the kingdom of Israel to pass out of his hands, and knowing, too, this purpose of God. At the same time, while each is carrying out his own purposes, God is also carrying out his. Solomon dies, Jeroboam lives, Rehoboam plays the egregious fool, the kingdom is divided, and the Ten tribes go just where God has determined them to go, and two remain just where he has determined them to remain, “for the cause was of the Lord that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.” (1 Kings xii. 15.) Was there any conflict here? Were not all the parties free to act as they did? Did

Fore-ordination at all interfere with Free-agency?

Take another example. After **Jeroboam** has been made king over the Ten tribes and his kingdom fully established in his hands, he sets up idolatry, placing his calves as the objects of worship, one in Dan and the other in Bethel. A message comes to him from God informing him that that very altar at Bethel, on which he was now sacrificing, would be polluted by the burning of men's bones upon it, even the bones of the very priests who were then sacrificing upon it.

A child, as yet unborn, was to accomplish God's purposes against it. His very name and lineage are given. He was to be king of Judah, one of the future descendants of David, and his name would be **Josiah**. When all this was to take place is not revealed, nor under what circumstances, only the fact that it *would* be done, and the person by whom it would be done. Nothing more is made known.

Here, then, is another of the hidden pur-

poses of God disclosed. It therefore is also another event that is certain and sure, and absolutely bound to take place. . . .

As a sign of the certain fulfillment of these things, the man of God gives the rending of the altar and the pouring out of the ashes which were upon it. The sign is fulfilled that very day, and in the very face of Jeroboam. But how does Jeroboam act, knowing all this? He sets about to *defeat* that purpose of God and prevent that certain event from coming to pass, endeavoring to arrest the man of God who is delivering the message, and prevent him from delivering anything further, as if *that* would prevent the prophecy from being accomplished. Why did he thus act? Because he was a free-agent and acted as he felt inclined to act. With what result? His hand is withered and his arm remains extended “so that he could not pull it in again to him.”

But this is not all. There lies that purpose of God revealed, and in the sight and knowledge of all who choose to see and know it.

Centuries roll away. Jeroboam and all the guilty actors of his day, and those of many years to come, have all passed to their account. The kingdom of Israel, after a career of wickedness and crime, is overthrown and brought to nought. Fourteen kings of the princely house of David have sat upon the throne of Judah, and still the prophecy remains unfulfilled. At last a fifteenth takes his place, who has been named all unconsciously by his parents *Josiah*. It is he, the child of prophecy, the predicted destroyer of the altar of Jeroboam and of Bethel. He seeks the reformation of Judah, destroys idolatry from its midst, and, with the same loving zeal for Jehovah, enters what was once the territory of the Ten tribes to do what he had done in Judah—burns the bones of men, and breaks down the altar erected by Jeroboam, *exactly as had been foretold of him three hundred and fifty years before.*

What is all this? Is it not *Fore-ordination*? And is there not also *Free-agency* here? And

yet did one *conflict with the other?* Was either Jeroboam or Josiah under any *compelling* influence to do what they did, the one in seeking to defeat, and the other unwittingly to accomplish the purpose of God?

One more illustration of another character, and this time from the life of our Lord. He was here upon earth to accomplish a certain work given to him of his Father. This he states over and over again, reiterating the statement in various ways. Until that work, therefore, is accomplished no accident can befall him, and no fatal violence be inflicted upon him. He will neither be crucified, nor stoned to death, nor put to death in any other manner whatever.

This is one of the “determinate counsels” of God, but as yet known to no one but the Saviour alone. It is a purpose known to no man, but at the same time infallibly *certain and sure* to be brought to pass. This, nevertheless, is *Fore-ordination*.

On the other hand, during all this time while

the secret and hidden purpose of God is silently and irresistibly moving to its accomplishment, the incensed and infuriated Jew, impelled by his own sinful passions, and led on, too, by Satan, seeks to kill the sinless Nazarene. And this is Free-agency. He is acting *just as he wishes to act.* And yet *Jesus is not killed*, and no man lays hands on him. Why? Because the Jew cannot take his life or attempt to do so? By no means—but “*because his hour is not yet come.*” And this is Predestination.

Now, all this time was not the Jew *free* in all that he did, both when he “sought to kill him,” as well as when he failed to “lay hands upon him,” even when having the opportunity for doing so? And was not Jesus free in *his* actions when he escaped out of their hands, or when he “walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples?”

Did this “determinate counsel and fore-

knowledge of God" interfere with the free-agency of any of these parties involved in these matters? Were they not both entirely consistent one with the other, and did they not leave God free to act according to the counsels of his own will without infringing on man's liberty, and man also free to act according to the purposes and inclinations of his own sinful heart?

But "we cannot understand *how* these things can be." Admitted, does that, nevertheless, disprove their *truth*, or that they *are* consistent one with another?

And thus do the Scriptures plainly teach, both by precept and example, that fore-ordination does not do away with the necessity of using the proper and appointed means of bringing to pass the event that has been fore-ordained.

And so also does human experience teach, and mankind show by their daily conduct, that, whatever may be their *theories* on the subject and their pretended difficulties, yet, when it

comes to the actual practice, they feel and realize no difficulty whatever between fore-ordination and the use of means. This is witnessed in every department of life, in every branch of business, and in almost everything that man does or undertakes to do.

There is no sane or intelligent person who doubts or disbelieves in God's *foreknowledge*, unless he believes in a *finite God*. But a being who is *finite, or limited in any of his attributes or powers*, cannot be God, and therefore such a conception or conjecture as a *finite God is an impossibility*. But admit the foreknowledge of God, as every rational person must admit, and you must admit at once the *certainty* of what he foreknows; that is, it is an event which is certain to come to pass. Because for God to foreknow an *uncertain event* is simply an absurdity as well as impossibility. It is a contradiction in terms. This any one can perceive. To suppose that God foreknows an event as future, and one day to come to pass, and then that event *never* to come to pass, or

for him to foreknow an event as *not* going to happen, and then that event *does* happen—all this is self-contradictory and absurd. An event to be foreknown cannot be uncertain, or a mere supposition or conjecture; it must be certain and sure. Hence God's foreknowledge of the future implies the *absolute and undoubted certainty* of that future, whatever it may be.

And yet, knowing these facts, and that what God foreknows as coming to pass will surely come to pass, mankind live and act as though there were no certainty about it, but that all depended upon *their* use of the proper means to bring it about.

The man of business knows that the results of every enterprise he may enter upon are already foreknown to God. Whether he will be successful or whether he will fail are already fixed facts known to God. Nevertheless, he forms his plans, uses the best light he has, employs all the means in his power, and acts as though all depended on him. And so does the farmer. What are to be the results of the

year's crop, what kind of seasons are to be given, whether adverse or prosperous, and everything connected with it, are matters well known to God, even before a furrow is run or a seed planted in the ground. And the farmer's success or failure is not going to change that result one iota. And yet he very properly uses all the appointed means to secure a result which he knows is fixed and certain. And this is right.

The Bible teaches us that the bounds of human life of each and every individual are appointed of God, and that beyond those bounds *he cannot pass*. The "measure of his days" has been apportioned off to him. The time, place and circumstances of the termination of that life are all known to God, even before that individual has come into existence. Do what he may, live where he may, and go where he may, he will die just when and where and in the circumstances which God has already appointed. No reflecting man doubts this. And yet what does he do? Reason foolishly and

absurdly, “I’ll not die before my time comes, nor in any other place, manner or circumstances than are already known to God, and, therefore, I need not use any means for preserving my life or lengthening out my days?” Quite the contrary. He eats, drinks, sleeps, uses the necessary food, rest, medicine, and employs all the means in his power to preserve and prolong his days. And he does right. Yet, at the same time, as he himself well knows, he is doing nothing more nor less than using the appointed and necessary means for bringing to pass *an already fixed and certain result.*

And thus it is. In every sphere, department or branch of life, mankind are acting in this way. Whatever difficulties they may conceive between fore-ordination and the use of means, or between an event being certain and sure to come to pass, and therefore no need to do anything to bring it to pass,—*yet in practice* they find none,—and thus demonstrate by actual experience that between these two imagined

contradictions there is no contradiction whatever, but the utmost harmony and agreement.

3. But does not Predestination make God the author of sin? If he has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, does not that include the commission of sin, and, therefore, according to this doctrine is not God the author of sin? By no means.

Because God's decrees are of two kinds, *effective* and *permissive*. He purposes *to bring some things to pass* by his own immediate power and agency, and he purposes to *permit* other things to come to pass, and at the same time overrule them to his own praise and glory. That which is *good* he brings to pass; that which is *evil* he permits to come to pass, and overrules it for good. In the execution of his purposes, and in the administration of his providence, there is a great deal of sin and wickedness brought out on the part of his creatures; but that does not make God the author of that sin and wickedness, even though

he foreknew that it would be committed, and determined to permit it.

*Why* he determined to permit it we cannot tell. "He giveth no account of his matters," and it is useless to inquire. We only know that, for wise and sufficient reasons, God has determined to permit the entrance of sin into this world, and at the same time to overrule it for good, and that this determination was formed in eternity. Beyond this we cannot go at present, but must wait until he gives us further light.

But right here is where the whole difficulty lies: not in the doctrine of fore-ordination, *but in the origin of evil.* Why did God ever allow it to enter the universe? Why does he permit it? Why was it permitted to enter our world? Why is it suffered to continue its ravages and desolations so long, when it appears to us that God could so easily expel it from our world, or repress it altogether? But these are questions no mortal can solve, and must be left unanswered until God answers them himself.

Yet it might just as well be argued that God is the author of sin, because he allows it to enter the universe, as that he is the author of sin because he determined to permit it and afterwards overrule it for good. But this difficulty of the origin of evil confronts every system of theology, one as much as the other; and the one who disbelieves in Predestination is as much bound to explain it, and is as justly chargeable with making God the author of sin as the one who believes it, unless he takes refuge in the hypothesis that God was powerless to prevent evil, and simply submits to it as an inexorable necessity that he cannot prevent or control. Apart from that hypothesis, however, this difficulty confronts the disbeliever in Predestination just as formidably as it does the believer in it, and if, in the one case, the fact that God determined according to an eternal purpose to permit the existence of sin makes him the author of sin, so does it in the other case. But the truth is, that in neither case does God's permitting sin to enter

the universe and continue its ravages so long make him its author. It only proves that there is much in God's dealings and dispensations towards his creatures which our finite minds cannot at present understand, and that it is the part of wisdom to leave these matters in his hands until that time when he chooses to make it plain. To sit in judgment on his dealings or to rashly and presumptuously demand of him, "What doest thou?" is but madness and folly. Let us not be guilty of it.

From these facts here adduced, and these illustrations of the doctrine as announced in the Word of God and realized in the daily experience of man, it must be manifest to every candid and right-thinking person, that the doctrine of Predestination is neither dishonoring to God, nor discouraging to man, nor deserving at all of that obloquy and reproach which have been so assiduously and persistently heaped upon it. Not so has *God* deemed it, when he thus clearly and unmistakably reveals it in his word; and not thus have those

men of God deemed it who, under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, have so grandly and sublimely made it known; and not thus have those giant intellects deemed it who bowed not to the mind of man, but who did bow with child-like reverence before the grandeur and majesty of that God “who doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and to whom none can say, What doest thou?”

The grandest, greatest, profoundest intellects of every age, and the deepest, truest thinkers of every land, have recognized its truth and acknowledged its power. And the more deeply and profoundly one reflects on the subject, the more thoughtfully he ponders the matter, and the more closely he scrutinizes the unfolding development of history, or even the minutest events of his own life, the more thoroughly will he be persuaded of the truth of this doctrine, and convinced that the “heavens *do* rule”; and that, amid all the multiform changes and varying vicissitudes of his earthly career, “there is

a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will."

"Great God! how infinite art thou!  
What worthless worms are we!  
Let the whole race of creatures bow  
And pay their praise to thee.

"Eternity, with all its years,  
Stands present in thy view;  
To thee there's nothing old appears;  
Great God! there's nothing new.

"Our lives through various scenes are drawn,  
And vexed with trifling cares,  
*While thine eternal thought moves on*  
Thine undisturbed affairs."

### **Uses of this Doctrine.**

What are the uses of this doctrine of Predestination? Why has God revealed it and made it known, and how is it to be applied? Clearly in *two* ways, namely, for *instruction* and *comfort*—instruction to all God's intelligent creatures, and comfort to his people. These are the two grand uses to which this great doctrine is to be put. Mankind are to be instructed by it. They are to be taught that God rules, reminded that Jehovah reigns and ex-

cuteth the counsels of his will. In their wild and ungovernable rage, their mad projects, their lawless ambition, their stupendous folly, and in the ten thousand schemes they are continually essaying without any regard to the will of Jehovah, and in the multitude of their thoughts and counsels against him, they need to be reminded of their utter impotency and vanity, and the futility of their devices. “The counsel of the Lord, *that shall stand.*” They need to be instructed by just such a truth as this—that there is nothing new to God, nothing unforeseen, nothing dependent on their actions as far as he is concerned, nothing accidental, nothing by chance, nothing that can defeat *his purposes*, and nothing to make void his counsels.

Within certain limits they may rage and rave, and lift their hands on high, and raise their puny arms toward heaven, and say, “Who is the Lord, that we should fear him, or the Almighty, that we should serve him?” and within certain limits they may carry out their

purposes and succeed in their narrow plans; yet, under all and over all and around all lies the stupendous encircling purpose of God, unmoved, undisturbed; and undiverted from its course, moving silently and slowly, yet grandly, to its accomplishment. On *that* rock their fury dashes in vain; against *that* barrier beat helplessly and impotently their mightiest efforts or maddest designs. *There* are “their proud waves stayed,” and hitherto may they come, but no further. This is the instruction the sons of men full often need, and of these facts they require to be frequently reminded, to curb their wrath and restrain their fiery passions. “The heavens *do* rule”—God is on the throne; God is managing the affairs of this world. He has a purpose in everything he does—a purpose not formed on the spur of the moment, or to meet the demands of some sudden emergency, or to defeat some unexpected or unforeseen turn in human affairs, but a purpose formed in eternity, and a purpose irresistibly to be accomplished. A purpose formed

in infinite wisdom, and executed in infinite love, without violence to the creature, or injury to his liberty and freedom of will, and a purpose which includes all events and all races of creatures in heaven, earth or hell. This is the doctrine of Predestination, and to this use of instruction may it be put.

But it also answers another purpose. It is intended for *comfort*—comfort to all God's people under the various lights and shadows, and the diversified vicissitudes of their often trying career. Amid the darkness of Providence, the often perplexing and inscrutable dispensations of his hand, the uncertainty and doubt that may encompass their paths in life, the prosperity of the wicked, the triumphing of evil, the trampling down of truth, the desolations of Zion, the rolling in of calamities, and a thousand other things which may occur to try their faith or shake their confidence in God, the knowledge of those facts and those truths made known in this doctrine of Predestination will serve as “an anchor to the

soul, both sure and steadfast." God reigns—his purposes are moving on to their accomplishment. Neither earth nor hell, neither wrath of man nor rage of demons, can defeat, delay or make void those purposes. "All things are working together for good to them that love God, and who are the called *according to his purpose*," and working together *because* God is on the throne, guiding, governing and directing them, and executing the counsels of his own will. Why, therefore, should the child of God be dismayed, discouraged or despondent? *Why* should he fear? and *what* should he fear? If God be for him, who can be against him? And who can injure or harm him beyond the purpose or permission of that God?

Nothing comes by chance. God is not acting at random. The Lord knows what he is about; and happen what may, nothing can frustrate or make vain that eternal purpose of his.

Who, who would not prefer a God like this,

often though he may be caricatured and held up to scoffs as an inexorable fate, or as a despotic and arbitrary tyrant, having no regard to the feelings or happiness of his subjects (all of which are but base caricatures or false and unfounded imputations upon his character)? Who would not prefer a God like this, who “knows the end from the beginning,” and “all whose works are truth and his ways judgment,” to a blind chance, or a being of limited knowledge; who must wait the unfolding and development of his creatures’ purposes before he knows what to do or how to act himself, and whose will may at any moment be thwarted and his purposes utterly defeated? A being who may not “laugh” at the futile efforts of his creatures, but at whom *they* may laugh and set at nought his designs? No, far rather be it ours like Nebuchadnezzar, who learned this truth through a deep and humiliating experience, to “bless the Most High, and praise and honor him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom

from generation to generation ; and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing ; and he doeth according to his will, in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ? . . . . all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment.” (Dan. iv. 34-37.)

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The following lines are added, as bearing upon this general subject, and serving to illustrate the lines of thought presented in the preceding pages. They may perhaps assist in giving comfort to some perplexed and sorely-amazed child of God, who cannot discern that deep and mighty purpose of a gracious Heavenly Father, which runs through all his affairs, confounding and baffling at times to the human mind, but which nevertheless is silently and grandly moving onwards to its glorious accomplishment ; and therefore they are here inserted. “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter,” is the message

of comfort and instruction which they convey to all such as find themselves lost in the depths of God's deep purposes, and wondering in silent bewilderment how all these things will end. He giveth no account of his matters, doeth according to the counsels of his own will, but yet *doeth all things well.*

Back and forth the shuttle flieth,  
Leaving still no track nor trace,  
While his work the Weaver plieth,  
In his dark and hidden place.  
Speaketh he no word nor warning,—  
Still, the work it goeth on,—  
Daily, nightly, evening, morning,  
Months and years are come and gone.  
The Weaver now the thread doth sever,—  
Finished all, complete forever,  
The task begun is done.

Such is life, and such it seemeth,  
As its days go speeding on,—  
Full of maze, as one who dreameth,  
Knowing not till all is gone.  
Day after day so fleetly flying,  
Back and forth, of woe or worth :  
To-day begun, to-morrow dying,  
Such the brief career of earth ;  
Days of darkness, days of sorrow,  
Days that know a bright to-morrow,  
Days of hope or mingled mirth.

Constantly the shuttle flieth,  
Threading thro' the deep-laid plot;  
Swift it cometh, swift it hieth,  
Back and forth, but ceasing not.  
Thread by thread the fabric growtheth,  
In forms of bird, or beast, or man,  
But what 'twill be, as yet none knoweth,  
*Until is seen the finished plan.*  
Dark or clear, or shrouded mystery,  
To all but Him 'tis unknown history,  
And *will be* till the whole we scan.  
Out of sight the Weaver sitteth,  
Working out his deep-laid plan;  
What He does as time fast flitteth,  
Knows no angel, saint, nor man.  
Now 'tis bright, and now 'tis sombre,  
Now 'tis blent with varying hues;  
Next 'tis mazes without number,  
Or 'tis joy,—*as He doth choose.*  
Enigmas, riddles, strange, perplexing,  
Who can solve these problems vexing,  
Who disclose the hidden clues?  
On and on the shuttle flieth,  
Swifter as it nears life's close;  
Soon 'twill come,—and then man dieth,  
Dieth in death's mortal throes.  
*All is done*, the fabric's ended,  
Bright and gay, or dark its hue,  
With many a varying shadow blended,  
And many a contrast strange to view.  
Naught's concealed, and naught now shrouded,  
*Gaze we then with eyes unclouded,*  
*And seize at last the tangled clue.*

'Tis not for mortal eyes t' unravel  
    Secrets deep beyond their ken,  
Nor toy with doubt nor dangerous cavil  
    At what is now or what hath been.  
Suffice it now, the Weaver worketh  
    In his own wise, wondrous way,  
And what beneath each figure lurketh  
    Will be disclosed some *future* day ;  
*Then*, backward o'er life's mystery turning,  
Thro' warp and woof the thread discerning,  
    *We'll read the riddle which there lay.*

## II.

### **Election.**

LIKE the doctrine of Predestination, that of Election has had a great deal of bad treatment to bear, and very unjustly. Passion and prejudice, together with an utter misconception and misunderstanding of what it really is, have all conspired to give it a bad name, until to some minds the very look of it and very thought of it are repulsive. It has been so assailed, caricatured and reviled, and abuse in such unstinted measure has been heaped upon it, that even its friends sometimes scarcely know whether to believe it or not. Perhaps no doctrine of revealed truth has been more bitterly assailed or more caricatured than this doctrine, unless it be its twin sister in tribulation—the kindred doctrine of *Predestination*. But, as in the former case, so in this, much of this fierce hostility has been due to

profound ignorance as to *what the doctrine really is*, and on what grounds it is believed and supported by its advocates.

Remove this ignorance and prejudice, and let the doctrine be stated as it is held and believed by its advocates, and no truth of inspiration can be more clearly and unanswerably demonstrated from Scripture than this, and none commend itself more rationally to the unprejudiced mind than this. Predestination and Election stand side by side, and are confirmed and vindicated by almost the same testimony in the Bible.

We have showed what the Word of God teaches in regard to the great doctrine of Predestination; we now proceed in the same way to ascertain what it teaches respecting the other doctrine—Election.

But, perhaps, it may be queried in astonishment, *Is that doctrine really taught in the Bible?* Do the Scriptures give any countenance to such a doctrine? And are we really warranted by them in believing such a doc-

trine? The reader shall judge for himself. To the law once more, and the testimony. Let the following suffice for the present: "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for *the elect's* sake those days shall be shortened. . . . For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive *the very elect.*"<sup>a</sup> "Who shall lay anything to the charge of *God's elect?* It is God that justifieth."<sup>b</sup> "And shall not God avenge *his own elect*, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"<sup>c</sup> "I am the good shepherd, and know *my sheep*, and am known of *mine*. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life *for the sheep*. And *other sheep* I have, which are not of this fold: *them also I must bring*, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."<sup>d</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxiv. 22, 24. <sup>b</sup> Rom. viii. 33. <sup>c</sup> Luke xviii. 7.

<sup>d</sup> John x. 14-16.

“Ye believe not, *because ye are not of my sheep*, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”<sup>e</sup>

“I speak not of you all: *I know whom I have chosen*: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.”<sup>f</sup> “Ye have not chosen me, but *I have chosen you*, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit. . . . If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, *but I have chosen you out of the world*, therefore the world hateth you.”<sup>g</sup> “That he should give eternal life to *as many as thou hast given him*.”<sup>h</sup> “*The men which thou gavest me out of the world*; thine they were, and thou gavest

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<sup>e</sup> John x. 26-29.    <sup>f</sup>xiii. 18.    <sup>g</sup>xv. 16, 19.    <sup>h</sup>xvii. 2.

them me.”<sup>i</sup> “I pray not for the world, *but for them which thou hast given me*; for they are thine.”<sup>j</sup> “Father, I will that *they also whom thou hast given me* be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.”<sup>k</sup> “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are *the called according to his purpose.*”<sup>l</sup> “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that *the purpose of God according to election might stand,*” etc.<sup>m</sup> “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”<sup>n</sup> “Even as Christ also *loved the church,* and gave himself for it.”<sup>o</sup> “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, *because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation* through sanctification of the Spirit and

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<sup>i</sup> John xvii. 6.      <sup>j</sup> John xvii. 9.      <sup>k</sup> John xvii. 24.

<sup>l</sup> Romans vii. 28.      <sup>m</sup> ix. 11.      <sup>n</sup> Eph. i. 4.      <sup>o</sup> Eph. v. 25.

belief of the truth.”<sup>p</sup> “Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, *which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*”<sup>q</sup> “Nevertheless, *the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his,*” etc.<sup>r</sup> “According to the faith of *God's elect;* and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness, in hope of eternal life, *which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.*”<sup>s</sup> “*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.*”<sup>t</sup> “Ye are *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people,*” etc.<sup>u</sup> “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”<sup>v</sup> “Who *loved me, and gave himself for me.*”<sup>w</sup> “And that he might make known the riches of his glory *on the vessels of mercy,*

<sup>p</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 13.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Tim. i. 9.

<sup>r</sup> ii. 19.

<sup>s</sup> Titus i. I, 2.    <sup>t</sup> 1 Pet. i. 2.    <sup>u</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 9.

<sup>v</sup> 1 John iv. 10.    <sup>w</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

which he had afore prepared unto glory.”<sup>x</sup> “And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together *his elect*.”<sup>y</sup> “Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the *election of grace*.”<sup>z</sup> “What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but *the election* hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”<sup>aa</sup> “I endure all things *for the elect’s sakes*.”<sup>bb</sup> “And as many as *were ordained to eternal life* believed.”<sup>cc</sup> “For I have *much people* in this city.”<sup>dd</sup> “The God of our fathers *hath chosen thee*, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.”<sup>ee</sup> “*Thy people* shall be willing in the day of thy power.”<sup>ff</sup> “For Jacob my servant’s sake, and *Israel mine elect*, I have even called thee by thy name; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.”<sup>gg</sup>

<sup>x</sup> Rom. ix. 23. <sup>y</sup> Mark xiii. 27. <sup>z</sup> Rom. xi. 5. <sup>aa</sup> xi. 7.

<sup>bb</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 10,

<sup>cc</sup> Acts xiii. 48.

<sup>dd</sup> Acts xviii. 10.

<sup>ee</sup> xxii. 14.

<sup>ff</sup> Psa. cx. 3.

<sup>gg</sup> Isa. xlv. 4.

These are some out of many testimonies in Scripture that might be gathered bearing upon this subject. Now, from these and various other similar passages in Scripture,—nay more, we might say, from the whole drift of Scripture,—the believers in Election have deduced the following conclusions:

1. That all mankind in a state of nature are in a state of ruin and death.
2. That out of this lost and fallen mass of humanity God hath chosen some to eternal life, moving upon them afterwards by his Holy Spirit, and influencing them by his grace to accept of those provisions made for their salvation.
3. This choice or election took place in eternity, “before the foundation of the world.”
4. This election to eternal life was not because of any worth or merit in them, or because of any foreseen good works which they would afterwards do, but only and solely because of his unmerited grace, mercy and love.

5. This election was in order to make them holy, to save them from their sins. "He shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. i. 14.)

6. All the elect, designated "his sheep," "those given to him," etc., will certainly and assuredly come unto him and be saved, not because they are by nature any better or any more deserving of salvation than the rest of mankind, but solely because they are influenced and enabled, through the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit moving upon their hearts, to come and be saved.

7. The rest of mankind God saw fit, in the sovereignty of his grace, for reasons known only to himself, to leave to the just consequences of their sin. To them, salvation is as freely and fully offered as it is to the elect, and they are not in any way debarred or hindered from coming, but by their own sin and their own unwillingness to come. "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me." "Ye *will not* come unto me, that ye might have life." (John vi. 37; v. 40.)

8. The elect are saved, not simply *because* they are elect, but because they have accepted God's offer of salvation and come unto him; and the non-elect are finally lost and condemned, *not because* they were non-elect, but because they would not receive the truth and come unto him.

9. All infants dying in infancy, and those born into this world in a state of moral irresponsibility, who are incapable of exercising a saving faith in Christ, are *not* lost, but saved through the electing love of God. To them the atonement of Christ is effectually applied, and divine grace, made efficacious by the Holy Spirit, who worketh when and where and by modes of operation as he seeth best. What these modes of operation are, or how he can reach the hearts of such persons, he has not informed us. We only know that he who formed man's spirit, and gave him breath and being, can always and under all circumstances effectually and efficaciously reach that spirit.

Such, reader, is the greatly assailed and bit-

terly reviled doctrine of Election, and such the inferences deduced from scripture on this subject by those who believe this doctrine. Are these conclusions wrong? Are they unfair? Are they unsupported and not borne out by the Bible? Is there anything “unjust,” or “shocking,” or “horrible” about them? Let the candid reader judge for himself.

Now let it be observed that the fact of election or non-election has no effect or influence whatever on the sinner, either favorably or unfavorably. He is not influenced in the least in coming to God by the fact of his election, because he knows nothing of it. Nor is he deterred by the fact of his non-election from coming to God for exactly the same reason. He can neither know whether he is one of the elect or non-elect *until he has first come to God*, and been accepted of him or rejected by him, and the thought of election or non-election has no influence upon him whatever. If he comes to God, he does so because he feels his need of salvation. He seeks his face, ob-

tains his forgiveness and is blessed. If he does not come to him, it is because he does not feel his need of salvation, and does not desire it. The fact of election or non-election, therefore, can have no possible influence upon him whatever, because he knows nothing of it, and can know nothing until he has first complied with the invitations of the gospel. *Then* he may know whether he is one of the elect, but not before. How then can the fact of election exert any influence on him in coming to Christ, when he must *first* come to Christ before he can ascertain that fact?—and if he *refuses* to obey the gospel call and come to Christ, he does so simply because *he does not want to come*. How then can his non-election be a hindrance or a discouragement in his coming, when he must first come to Christ and be rejected by him before he can possibly ascertain that fact? And when, refusing to come, God grants him his desire, and treats him just exactly as he wanted to be treated, and asked to be treated when he said, “I pray thee *have me excused*,”

how can he complain of injustice in this, and take refuge behind the fact of his non-election to life? He did not *know* that he was not elected to life, and *could* not know it until he first complied with the requirements of the gospel, and *he did not care*. How then can the fact of election or non-election influence him in any way favorably or unfavorably? And as the sinner is not accepted of God and saved *because* he is one of the elect, but because he has accepted the gospel offer and received Christ; and as he is not rejected of God and lost *because* he is not of the elect, but because he would not accept that offer of salvation and receive Christ, how can any injustice or wrong in this be charged against God? “I pray thee have me excused” has been his prayer, persistently offered and persevered in, and his one continued reply to all the invitations of the gospel, and all the overtures of divine grace as they have been addressed to him, and if God should grant him that request, and forever “excuse” him from this spurned and

slightest feast, who could charge him with wrong or injustice?

And had there been no election in the case, or non-election, would the lost sinner's condition have been any better than it now is? In both cases he would have been a lost sinner, lost and condemned *for exactly the same reason and on exactly the same grounds*, viz.: his own personal sin and transgression. Non-election does not bring him into condemnation, nor does election deliver him out of it. Sin, and nothing else, brought him into condemnation, and his own personal faith and repentance will bring him out of it; and had there been no election or non-election in the matter, this would have been precisely his condition. In what respect, then, has it inflicted any injury upon him?

Election did not bring him into that condition of ruin and death in which he is in a state of nature; it merely finds him there, just where his sin had plunged him, and is therefore in no way responsible for the injury he

suffers. He brought that on himself; and if lost at last and finally condemned, he is just exactly where he would have been had there been no election in the matter, and for exactly the same reason. Where, then, has this matter of election been the cause, occasion or means of possible injury to him whatever? But will it be asked, Does not this matter of election affect God's dealings towards the sinner, so as to make him the object of his pleasure or displeasure on that ground, or, at least, does it not lead him to exert some kind of an influence over the sinner, which in one case will *compel* him to comply with God's requirements, even when not desiring to do so, and in another case, which will *prevent* him from complying with those requirements, even when desiring to do so? Of course not, as the Bible plainly teaches. Where is there the slightest hint to the effect that one person is *compelled* to come and seek acceptance with God merely because he is one of the elect, and another one repelled or thrust off because he is not of the

elect, even though desiring to come and be saved? In the one instance the sinner is accepted and saved because he heeded the call, "Hear, and your soul shall live," or, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth"; in the other instance he is rejected and lost because he would not obey these calls. Wherein, then, has God acted harshly or unjustly towards any man in this matter of election?

Now, we ask the questions again, because they go right to the very bottom of all the misunderstanding connected with the doctrine of Election: if God inflicts no injury upon the sinner because he is not one of the elect; if he rejects no one upon that ground, but simply and solely on the ground of his own personal and individual sin unrepented of, and receives and saves no one on the ground of his being one of the elect, but solely on the ground of his having accepted the Gospel offer; if the sinner elected to eternal life knows nothing of that fact, and can know nothing until he comes

to Christ, and therefore cannot be influenced at all by that fact in coming to Christ; and if the sinner *not* elected to life knows nothing of that fact, and can know nothing of it until he has first come to Christ and been rejected of him, and therefore cannot possibly be deterred or discouraged by that fact in his desires or endeavors to come to Christ; and if the sinner who is *not* elected to life is not by that act brought into any worse or any different condition from what he was before, but is in exactly the same condition—no better, no worse—in which he would have been had there been no election or non-election in the matter—a condition into which he was brought by sin, and not by God's purpose of election;—if all this is true, (and it is just what the Scripture testifies on the subject,) then in what possible manner has God acted unjustly to man, or in what manner has man received injury or wrong by God's act of election? Viewed in this light; and which we believe to be exactly the light in which God has put it in his Word,

it would be very difficult indeed to find any ground of complaint against God, or any foundation for the charge of injustice or wrong against him.

Will it, then, be asked, Why, then, should God have any election in the matter, and of what purpose is it at all? "For so it seemed good in thy sight," is his own answer. With this we might well rest satisfied, without seeking beyond. He has not given us his reasons.

Yet a little reflection will convince any one that, after the human race had fallen by their sin, and were under his just wrath and displeasure, but one of three modes of procedure, so far as we can see, was possible to God—either by some mode of salvation to save all mankind, or to save none, or else to save some, and leave the others to the just consequences of their sin; and this last mode of procedure is just that one which God, in his infinite wisdom, has seen fit to adopt. He has determined to save some, not on the ground of their elec-

tion to life, but because of their acceptance of his offer of salvation—an offer addressed, without reserve, to all mankind,—and to leave the others in their state of condemnation and death, not because of their non-election to life, but because of their unwillingness to accept of his offer of salvation, addressed to them as well as all mankind.

What is there so “shocking” or “horrible” in this, or deserving of reprobation in a rational being? And especially so, when we recall the fact already so often stated, that in the act of election no possible or conceivable injury is inflicted on a single human being, and no one is by that act brought into a worse condition than before, or debarred or in any way hindered by it from escaping from that condition.

✗ The truth is, that Election, instead of being designed in any way to operate unfavorably upon the sinner, or against him, fills a different place, and is intended more for God in his dealings with those who are saved, designated in his word the “vessels of mercy which he had

afore prepared unto glory" (Rom. ix. 23) than for man. As has been well remarked, it is the rampart which God has erected around the sheepfold, not to exclude therefrom a single soul who may desire to enter and be saved, but for the protection and safety of those who *have* entered and are sheltered within. It is a barrier, erected in infinite love, *not to keep out* but to *keep in*, and to secure the eternal and infallible salvation of those who have "heard" the voice of the shepherd and obeyed that call. "My sheep *hear my voice*, and I know them, *and they follow me*: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, *neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*" (John x. 27, 28.) Election is the secret purpose of God, with which *we* have nothing to do, and which influences us in no possible shape or form in anything we do—a purpose which directs the operations of *his* grace, leading him to bestow that grace just when and where, and to that measure or extent, which seems good to him, yet which de-

nies salvation to no man, and inflicts injury upon none.

A secret purpose which compels no one, not desiring it, to come unto him, and which discourages no one from coming, who desires to do so, and a secret purpose of which no one can ever become cognizant until he has first made trial of that grace. To the child of God, who walks in the light of his face, and who seeks to do his Father's will, the doctrine is full of comfort and instruction, but to none others.

God does not propose to give comfort to the sinner in his sins, and he does not. But he does offer comfort and "strong consolation" to "those who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them." And to them the doctrine of Election will never prove otherwise than a source of adoring wonder, gratitude and love. So the apostle felt. "*We are bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*"

(2 Thess. ii. 13.) And so, too, others have felt, and will feel.

The truth is, that multitudes have been woefully misled in regard to what the doctrine of Election really is, and the conceptions they have formed on the subject have been correspondingly erroneous. The conception of Election entertained by many—we might safely say of all who disbelieve it—is about this: That God, by a mere arbitrary caprice, and without any good reasons whatever, saw fit to doom vast multitudes of the human race to endless perdition, and from the same arbitrary caprice also destined a comparatively small number to eternal life. The one class will be lost, do what they may; and though earnestly desiring to be saved, craving it, praying for it and anxiously seeking it, will nevertheless be thrust off, rudely repelled and rejected on the alone ground and for the only reason that they are not of the elect. The other class will be saved, do what they may; and through resisting salvation and anxiously avoiding it and refusing

it, will nevertheless *be compelled* to be saved, and all on the alone ground and for the only reason that they belong to the elect. That is, the great multitudes and vast majority of the race who *are anxious* for salvation, and would give all they possess to obtain it, are rejected and rudely repelled, *simply because they are not of the elect*; and the small minority of the race who thoroughly *detest* salvation, and would give all they possess to escape it, nevertheless have it thrust upon them, and are saved in spite of all their efforts to the contrary, and *simply because they are of the elect*. Such is about the average conception that mankind have of the doctrine of Election; and against this caricature of their own creation they direct their venom and spite.\*

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\* This idea has been presented in numberless ways, and always to make the very term Election as abhorrent to the human mind as possible. A friend of the writer's once heard it presented *from the pulpit* in the following manner:

The whole human race were represented as lying in a deep pit of misery and despair, and God from above

But such is *not* the doctrine of Election, either as taught in Scripture or as believed by its advocates. The only ones who *do* believe in it, if it is believed in at all by any one, are those who so often harp upon it, and hold it up as the object of their derision. Besides them, there are none others who hold to or advocate such a doctrine. The entire misconcep-

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was letting down a rope to draw them out. This rope represented salvation. Multitudes were frantically grasping at the rope and imploring to be lifted out, yet the rope would be drawn away with the words, "No, no; you don't belong to the elect, and you can't come out by this rope." And then their agony and despair would be depicted in glowing colors, and that of all the various classes, old and young, in their desperate but vain efforts to obtain salvation from their wretched condition, all *desiring* it and *struggling* for it, but all met by the same cold and heartless reply, "No, no; you are not one of the elect." On the other hand, some were represented as caught by the rope and dragged up in spite of their efforts to the contrary, "because they were of the elect," etc.

This illustration is but a *fair* specimen of the manner in which the doctrine of Election has been represented by its enemies. And this is about the average idea that mankind have of it.

tion on this whole subject is based upon the assumption that the majority of mankind *are anxious* for salvation, and would gladly accept it if they only enjoyed the opportunity of doing so, but are denied the coveted opportunity by means of the decree of Election, and hence their opposition to the doctrine; whereas the entire teaching and testimony of Scripture is exactly and most positively to the contrary. "There is *none* that seeketh after God," "*no man* regarded," "*ye* would none of my counsel," "*ye* would not," "*ye* will not come," and hundreds of similar testimonies, is what the Scriptures plainly teach. Instead of multitudes *desiring* salvation, there is no one that desires it. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," resists all his overtures, and fights against him with all the opposition of its nature, and until influenced by the operations of divine grace, *will never* seek God's face or endeavor after reconciliation. On the contrary, he does all that he can to escape these influences and to avoid salvation. To be saved

from sin, and be made perfect in holiness, is something for which he cares nothing whatever, and which is anything but attractive or desirable to him. And hence it is an utter misconception of the whole subject to speak or reason of the sinner being *anxious* for salvation, or desiring it, until he has been brought into that frame of mind by the gracious influences of God's Spirit. If he ever becomes anxious on the subject, or so as to earnestly crave and desire salvation, he will not fail of obtaining it whenever he seeks it. And if he does not obtain it, it will simply be because he does not desire it nor seek it. No one has ever sought the Lord, in accordance with his directions, but has found him, and no one ever will. "And ye shall seek me, and *find me*, when ye shall search for me *with all your heart.*" (Jer. xxix. 13.) Let the sinner then cease to cavil about "being *anxious* for salvation," and "earnestly desiring" it, but being debarred from it by the decree of Election. If he is so anxious about it, let him approach the

Lord in his appointed way, seek him with the whole heart, and he will soon ascertain whether the decree of Election is in his way. But until he does so, his mouth must be closed and his objections silenced.

Here, perhaps, another objector will reply, “If I am elected to eternal life, I will be saved, do what I may; and if I am not elected, I will be lost, do what I may; so that I do not see that there is any use of my doing anything whatever towards securing my salvation.” This is a very common objection and a very popular one, but, like many another common and popular objection in other matters, a very foolish and flippant one, and without any force or relevancy whatever. You may just as well argue that because “the measure of your days” is known unto God (Psa. xxxix. 4), and therefore a fixed and definite period; or because “the number of your months is with him” (Job xiv. 5), and therefore beyond *your* control, that therefore you may live as you please, take no thought or care for your life, what you

eat or what you drink or what danger you incur, because you will not die before your time comes; or that you will plant no crop, cultivate no ground, attend to no business, and trouble yourself about nothing whatever, because God knows what will be on the morrow, next week or next year, and that whatever is to be will be, without any aid on your part in bringing it to pass; or because God's purposes are sure to be fulfilled, therefore you have nothing to do whatever in the matter, and are not responsible in any respect for anything that may occur; and a thousand other foolish things, as many before you have done; and your arguments will be just as valid and just as rational as the ones here urged against Election. Nevertheless, your objection is partly true and partly false; yet the true and the false so absurdly blended together as to vitiate it all, and render it utterly nugatory and void. It is indeed true, that "if you are elected to eternal life, you will be saved"; yet not because you are elected, and therefore that "you may

do as you choose and live as you please," but *because you yield to the influence of God's grace, obey his commands, and live as a child of his*, following after that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." In this case your salvation, while due, in the first place, entirely to the unmerited grace of God, is nevertheless conferred on you through a personal interest in Christ, which you have obtained by repentance and faith in him, and life of holiness and abhorrence of sin. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 11.)

And it is also true, that "if you are *not* elected to eternal life, you will not be saved," yet *not because* you were not elected to life, or because you may vainly seek to be saved, "do what you will," but *because you refuse to seek a personal interest in Christ*; you refuse to obey the call of the gospel addressed to you; you refuse to forsake your sins, but continue to love and cleave to them, and *therefore* "you

will be lost." "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. . . . *therefore* shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices." (Prov. i. 24-31.) "How often would *I* have gathered you together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and *ye* would not." (Luke xiii. 34.) In this case, it is mournfully true that you are *not saved*, yet not because you were not of the elect, or because you desired to be saved, yet could not, but only *because you would not*.

Stated as you have stated the objection, reader, or as multitudes of others state it, merely as a caricature on the doctrine of Election, or as an excuse to justify you in continuing in sin, the objection is simply a compound of absurdity and falsehood; but stated in its *true* character, it loses all its force, and

fastens the responsibility of your failure to obtain salvation just where it belongs—on your own individual self. “*Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.*” Life is before you, within your reach, offered to you, and you will not accept it. How can you cry out and declaim against God, or clamor against Election as being a hindrance in your way and debarring you from obtaining life, when the simple truth in the matter is that you do not desire eternal life, and will not accept it? “*YE would not,*” is the real and truthful explanation of it all. This alone is the preventing cause, and *not* God’s purpose in Election.





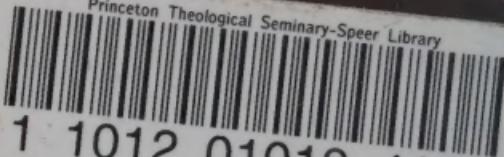


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